



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9466th meeting

Thursday, 2 November 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Zhang Jun/Mr. Geng Shuang (China)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. França Danese
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mrs. Paolini
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Ambassador Sérgio França Danese, Permanent Representative of Brazil, for his service as President of the Council for the month of October 2023. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador França Danese and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2023/816, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Switzerland.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2706 (2023).

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to participate in this meeting.

I request the Protocol Officer to escort His Excellency Mr. Željko Komšić, Chairman of the

Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to a seat at the Council table.

Željko Komšić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Olof Skoog, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): First of all, allow me to join you, Mr. President, in congratulating the Brazilian delegation on its outstanding work during the month of October, as well as to congratulate you and your team on assuming the presidency. We assure you of our full support.

Switzerland welcomes the Security Council's unanimous vote on resolution 2706 (2023), which renews the authorization for the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The mission is making a significant contribution to peacekeeping in Bosnia and Herzegovina and is playing a key role in stabilizing the region. We thank all the members of the Council for their constructive engagement throughout the process.

True to its long-standing commitment, Switzerland will continue to support the mission in fulfilling its mandate, including through the secondment of civilian and military experts. The security, stability and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina are based on its unity and territorial integrity. The Dayton Agreement must therefore be respected and implemented in its entirety.

With regard to the civilian aspects of the Dayton Agreement, Switzerland reiterates its support for the Office of the High Representative, who must be able to fulfil his mandate throughout the country. While the High Representative still plays a key role, the primary aim continues to be to implement the 5+2 agenda and close the Office.

We thank the High Representative for his latest report, in which he refers to serious tensions and divisions that undermine a peaceful and multi-ethnic coexistence in the country. In recent months, inflammatory rhetoric and secessionist threats have intensified. The

glorification of war criminals, historical revisionism and attempts to deny the genocide cannot be tolerated. The actions of the leaders of Republika Srpska have particularly contributed to deepening divisions, calling into question the country's constitutional order and compromising the protection of fundamental rights. We deplore the legislative initiatives aimed at restricting independent media and civil society. Freedom of expression and freedom of association are essential to any democratic society.

It is incumbent upon the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to act in good faith in the interests of the country as a whole and all parts of its society. It is incumbent on them not to inflame tensions and to engage in constructive dialogue and cooperation in order to bring reforms to a successful conclusion on the European path. Credible efforts are necessary in order to strengthen the rule of law, protect human rights and fight corruption.

The security, stability and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina also depend on the participation of women in all decision-making processes. Women are currently underrepresented in the political arena. There is an urgent need to prioritize gender equality. Switzerland welcomes the attention paid to those issues and to the worrisome cases of violence against women in the High Representative's report. We encourage him to include gender analysis in all his work.

Promoting tolerance and strengthening social cohesion requires the daily efforts of all members of society — citizens, as well as Government and politicians. At the same time, concrete measures for dealing with the past, focusing on the victims and their families and for advancing reconciliation must be taken in order to resolve the deep-rooted tensions that are resurfacing.

As we have been doing for 30 years and given the close ties that unite us, Switzerland will continue to support Bosnia and Herzegovina on the path towards a united, peaceful and prosperous future.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on China's presidency of the Security Council for the month of November, and I pledge the full support of Gabon. I also congratulate Brazil for its remarkable presidency of the Council during the month of October.

The Dayton Agreement remains the ideal framework and the best guarantee to enable Bosnia and

Herzegovina to overcome the challenges of its recent history in order to pave the way for a political future in keeping with its sociological reality and taking into account the aspirations of the two entities and the three constituent peoples. We therefore welcome establishment and operationalization of almost all the Governments and Parliaments at State and entity level following the most recent general elections.

The acceleration of the implementation of the 14 measures for integration into the European Union is in itself a significant step forward. At the same time, implementation of the 5+2 agenda must be expedited if Bosnia-Herzegovina is to emerge from international scrutiny and the unprecedented political situation in which it finds itself.

The volatile sociopolitical context, the permanent mistrust and tension that characterize relations between the various entities and the central State, as well as between the latter and Mr. Schmidt, all contribute to creating a deleterious climate that poisons political life and delays progress towards normalization. There is an urgent need for the parties involved to find a lasting solution to this situation, which does not strengthen the rule of law. The constant tug-of-war between Mr. Schmidt and the Republic of Srpska is no longer tenable and must end.

We call on the Bosnian entities to overcome their antagonisms in order to move forward more resolutely and decisively and to prioritize nation-building, which depends on five essential factors.

First, there must be progress in reforming the Constitution and State institutions, in particular in line with the political commitment formalized on 12 June 2022 in Brussels through the "Political agreement on principles for ensuring a functional Bosnia and Herzegovina that advances on the European path".

Secondly, we must find a lasting solution to the problem of public State property, which is the source of great tensions and many clashes, as well as solutions aimed at preventing political deadlocks on the formation of future Governments.

Thirdly, the rights of each entity must be respected. That includes respect for beliefs, religious sites and memorial celebrations, as well as resolving the issue of missing persons.

Fourthly, victims of war crimes must have access to justice. In that respect, my country welcomes

the adoption of the law on the protection of civilian victims of war, which strengthens the rights of victims and grants equal social rights for children born of wartime rape.

Fifthly, there must be stronger commitment to building trust and strengthening community life and social cohesion. That obviously implies creating the conditions for mixed communities at all levels; reinforcing the security of returnees with a view to better integration; better preventing and protecting women against violence, sexual assault and gender-related crimes; protecting and guaranteeing freedom of expression, in particular freedom of the press; and preventing, combating and repressing hate speech and the rejection of the other.

My country calls on all parties to focus their efforts on the search for lasting peace and security in Bosnia-Herzegovina and to conduct an uncompromising assessment of the current operating architecture to that end. Peace, security and prosperity in the country will not be achieved against the Bosnians, but with them and for them, in all their diversity and richness.

We encourage national initiatives that promote interaction between the entities and the Federation and enable Bosnia-Herzegovina to remain master of its own destiny.

In conclusion, my country welcomes the renewal of the mandate of the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is an essential link in the peace and security architecture in Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to help the country overcome its security challenges.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Let me first congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency. I also wish to congratulate the delegation of Brazil for its successful presidency. I also want to thank the Chairman of the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Komšić, for participating in today's meeting.

The United States welcomes the Security Council's unanimous reauthorization of the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We thank the European Union and its member States for their ongoing commitment to maintaining peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We alarmed by recent developments, including rhetoric and actions from officials undermining the Dayton Peace

Agreement and the country's constitutional structure, rule of law, stability and territorial integrity.

The international community must meet this challenge. We must work together to counter the destabilizing and dangerous efforts of the Republika Srpska National Assembly and Republika Srpska's President Dodik to weaken fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and the constitutional foundations of the country's institutions. The goal of the High Representative and of the international community is to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty, territorial integrity and multi-ethnic character. In particular, we are focused on advancing rule-of-law reforms, supporting good governance and rooting out corruption — work that will bring security and prosperity to all citizens, of all ethnicities, in both entities and in Brčko District.

High Representative Schmidt and his Office have the full support of the United States and merit the full support of the international community in their work. We are very appreciative of the High Representative's recent report, which the Secretary-General has shared with the Council. The High Representative's reports, in line with precedent and the requirements of resolution 1031 (1995), are vital to keeping the international community informed about the ongoing efforts to ensure enduring stability and prosperity in the region. In the light of the recent attacks on the High Representative led by President Dodik, we must underscore that the Security Council has no role in choosing or appointing the High Representative, which is the responsibility of the Peace Implementation Council.

The United States remains committed to the goal of a democratic, stable and prosperous country. We fully support its full integration into the transatlantic community and its path to membership in the European Union. We are committed to partnering with its citizens and Government as they work for the comprehensive electoral, political, social and economic reforms necessary to secure the future that all of the country's people deserve. I want to close by reaffirming our steadfast support of Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty, territorial integrity, democracy and multi-ethnic character.

Mrs. Paolini (France) (*spoke in French*): I welcome the participation in this meeting of the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Komšić.

France believes that the international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains essential to the stability of the country and the region, in accordance with the framework provided for by the Dayton Peace Accords. Since 2004, the European Union has played a fundamental role in ensuring the stability and security of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region through the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR-Althea). It does so on behalf of the whole international community, in accordance with the Dayton Accords and the Security Council's decisions. We therefore welcome the Council's unanimous adoption today of resolution 2706 (2023), which renews EUFOR-Althea's mandate for 12 months. With regard to the civilian aspect, France supports the mandate of the High Representative. We are aware that the Office of the High Representative is not intended to continue beyond what is necessary, which is the achievement of the 5+2 agenda, as was clearly established in 2008.

France, as a witness to the Dayton and Paris agreements, firmly supports the unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is why we expect the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to refrain from any rhetoric or unilateral action that calls into question the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the country. France is particularly concerned about the declarations and initiatives made by Republika Srpska in recent months aimed at weakening both the country's institutional order and unity and the efforts being made to achieve reforms within the framework of the European integration process. The threats that have been made against the High Representative, and the desire to restrict his freedom of movement, are not acceptable either. We further note the persisting community tensions, attacks on returnees and discrimination against religious communities. We condemn those acts, just as we condemn any glorification of war crimes or denials of the Srebrenica genocide. We call on all political leaders to refrain from speeches that fuel those tensions, and to work resolutely for reconciliation, which is essential for the country's future.

France fully supports Bosnia and Herzegovina's European perspective, just as it does for the other countries of the Western Balkans. The granting of candidate status in December 2022 was designed to encourage the reforms needed to enable Bosnia and Herzegovina to make decisive progress on its path to European Union membership. The progress made in that regard must continue. France calls for

the implementation of the commitments made within the framework of the political agreement reached on 12 June 2022 in Brussels by the political representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the auspices of President Charles Michel of the European Council. The commitments that have been made, especially where achieving the 14 key priorities for democracy and the rule of law is concerned, must be implemented. It is up to the Bosnian authorities alone to move forward on a path of reform in order to make European rapprochement a reality for the benefit of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on China's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We wish China another successful term in leading our work, and you can count on my delegation's support in that regard. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to our colleagues from the delegation of Brazil, and to congratulate them on their commendable efforts and professionalism during their successful presidency of the Council in a very challenging month of October. And I would like to welcome the participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and the European Union in today's meeting.

The progress made in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the last several years is encouraging and hopeful, both for the citizens who deserve peace and the members of the international community who have helped support those who seek it. However, despite the tangible gains that have been made, tensions have continued to increase throughout this year. Against that backdrop, we need to protect the hard-earned gains in Bosnia and Herzegovina to achieve a sustainable future for its people. The United Arab Emirates would like to highlight the following key points.

First, we welcome the Council's unanimous renewal of the mandate of the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR-Althea) through its adoption today of resolution 2706 (2023), reflecting the confidence the Security Council has in EUFOR-Althea and the important role it plays in promoting stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That unity of faith in the Council is important at what is a delicate moment in ensuring the continued security and safety of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in coordination with its Government.

Secondly, the United Arab Emirates recognizes that choosing peace, which requires courage, vision and sometimes difficult choices, is not easy, but it must be done. The current political trajectory in Bosnia and Herzegovina is of concern, and if left unaddressed, the tensions could undermine the country's determination to achieve stability and prosperity for all. We encourage good-faith political dialogue aimed at overcoming all the outstanding issues and progressing beyond the divisions we are seeing today.

Thirdly, concrete efforts to ensure economic development are needed. If a stable social and political landscape for future generations is to be built, Bosnia and Herzegovina's young people have a key role to play. In conjunction with the international community, they can contribute to developing industries and infrastructure that facilitate economic opportunities and help ensure that they see hope in their country's future.

Fourthly, the United Arab Emirates continues to stress the importance of addressing hate speech. It is a direct threat to the peace that has endured since the signing of the Dayton Accords. Peaceful coexistence and tolerance are essential pillars for building peaceful and cohesive societies, especially diverse ones such as in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Pushing back against hate speech takes concerted efforts and a whole-of-society approach. Political, religious and community leaders, as well as the media, should be proactive in addressing hate speech wherever it is manifested. We urge for continued efforts to mitigate the impact of harmful rhetoric.

The United Arab Emirates reaffirms its support for the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in line with international law and the Dayton Accords. We also underline the crucial roles played by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina and EUFOR-Althea, and we stress the importance of fully respecting the country's national institutions. Maintaining stability and advancing the reconciliation process is essential to ensuring the achievement of a sustainable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): Mozambique wishes to warmly congratulate China on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for November. We assure you, Mr. President, of our full support and cooperation. We thank Brazil for its excellent leadership during its presidency of the Council in October.

We welcome the convening of this important debate on the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is a unique opportunity to keep Security Council members updated on the developments on the ground. We extend our thanks to the rapporteur, Mr. Christian Schmidt, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his useful and updated information.

We note with satisfaction the progress made in the integration process into the European Union (EU), as well as the greater institutional functionality. However, we are concerned about the persistent obstacles to effectively implementing the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Despite the substantial progress, there is still much to be done, especially in relation to the rule of law, in view of deepening progress already made, particularly with regard to public administration, the judicial system and law enforcement in general.

We continue to be concerned about the increase in violent attacks against returnees, discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation, violence against women and the intimidation of journalists. It is important to recognize that those issues have a negative impact on the daily life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is therefore crucial that we work together to promote and protect human rights and equality for all.

We encourage all parties to refrain from using nationalist and divisive rhetoric and to uphold the principles and objectives contained in the General Framework Agreement for Peace and the constitutional framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The election of a new Government of the Federation on 28 April by the House of Representatives, replacing the previous Government which had a technical mandate since 2018, is another encouraging sign.

Mozambique encourages the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their efforts to promote reconciliation, peace, stability and development throughout the country.

We commend the timely interventions of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially those to counteract the proposed harmful and counterproductive legislation seeking to undermine the implementation of decisions by the High Representative.

In conclusion, there is no peacebuilding or nation-building without true reconciliation and healing from the past. Unless action is taken to repair the harm from the past violence, a truly fair, peaceful and interdependent future will remain elusive. We therefore call upon the international community to continue its support to those efforts.

Given the current political and security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mozambique considers it acceptable to extend the mandate of the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the multinational stabilization force led by the EU and the Office of the High Representative.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate China and its team on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council during the month of November. I would like to reiterate our delegation's support in working with you, Mr. President, and wish you, Sir, every success. I would also like to once again repeat our appreciation for the work undertaken by the delegation of Brazil over the course of October, which was so full of challenges and complex matters.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the detailed briefing on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I welcome the presence of the representatives of the European Union, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia in the Chamber.

It has been regrettable to learn that, since the last time the Council met to discuss this issue (see S/PV.9319), there has been an increase in secessionist rhetoric by certain political actors, as well as an increase in actions challenging the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Respect for the constitutional, legal and institutional framework of the country is the cornerstone in achieving peace, stability and progress. It is important that the parties demonstrate the utmost responsibility in conducting their activities and refrain from unilateral measures that run counter to the constitutional order established under the Dayton Agreement. The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina recognizes the importance of the High Representative's role in the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Agreement, and the mandate conferred upon him must be respected.

We encourage the redoubling of efforts for the full implementation of the commitments, conditions

and objectives established in 2008, in the 5+2 agenda, which will make it possible for the Office of the High Representative to fulfil its mandate.

My country is concerned about the increase in reported cases of femicide, as well as the increasing cases of gender-based violence. We therefore encourage the authorities to step up their efforts to prevent and respond to that urgent problem, which continues to claim lives and affect society.

In that vein, it is imperative that efforts be strengthened to move towards the full, equal and safe participation of women in the political life of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to reject the intimidation of journalists and the discrimination faced by the LGBTQ+ community.

Ecuador hopes that all parties will favour dialogue and cooperation and reject corrosive rhetoric in favour of the well-being of the people and peaceful and safe coexistence. The Council should maintain its commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the Dayton Agreement.

We express our support for the work of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in maintaining security and stability in the country.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the beginning of Chinese presidency of the Security Council, and wish your delegation, Mr. President, every success. We also thank the delegation of Brazil for its stewardship of the Council during the very challenging month of October.

We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Željko Komšić.

The developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina are a source of growing concern for us. The internal political crisis is now a permanent reality. Inter-ethnic clashes are not only continuing without resolution, but they are also escalating and assuming new forms. Post-conflict resolution in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which the Security Council meets twice a year to discuss, has been brought to a standstill by the deliberate efforts of the Western community, which is seeking to advance its narrow geopolitical interests in the region.

On the basis of a deep and comprehensive analysis of the situation, we cannot but note that the Western

participants in the reconciliation process in the country, hiding behind their status in the context of the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, have set a course for the destruction of this core document for the maintenance of peace and security, which was endorsed by resolution 1031 (1995). The core, fundamental principles of Dayton — the equality of three constituent peoples and two entities with broad constitutional powers — are under threat. Instead, contrary to the spirit and letter of Dayton, the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina are subject to attempts to impose on them Western attitudes on the centralization and unitarization of the State under the misleading formula of the so-called “civil society”.

Another element of destabilization is the obsessive desire of Western countries to supplant Dayton with the vaunted Euro-Atlantic integration and to usher the country into NATO against the wishes of its peoples.

We have conscientiously cautioned against the dangerous nature of such a policy, aimed at undermining the pillars of the statehood of Bosnian-Herzegovina, on which the security and stability in the country depends. We recall that it was a finely tuned system of taking into account the interests of the three peoples and two entities that brought peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995 and has made it possible to maintain it throughout the subsequent period. Its collapse would have catastrophic consequences.

The Security Council cannot continue to ignore the fact that, before its eyes, Bosnia and Herzegovina has effectively transformed into a colonial entity that is being openly manipulated by Washington, London and Brussels. The destructive activity of the self-proclaimed “High Representative”, who has single-handedly appropriated the entire range of State functions and is already trying to prohibit the calling into question of his manipulations at the legislative level, is now seriously escalating tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and exacerbating inter-ethnic clashes. The pseudo-High Representative is divorced from reality, as is apparent in his so-called “report”, a work that does not merit any substantive comments. It is regrettable that the Security Council has to be the recipient of such fabrications, the purpose of which is to create a false impression of the state of affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to turn everything upside down and to shift responsibility for the crisis to those who defend the Dayton framework. We invite the members of the Council to consult the relevant material prepared by the representative of

Republika Srpska. This document abounds with objective information about the real situation.

The Office of the High Representative has long become obsolete. It must be closed down as soon as possible. Nothing positive can be expected from it for Bosnia and Herzegovina. There can be no doubt that the future of the peoples of the country lies exclusively in their own hands. The key to resolving all problems lies in an equitable internal political dialogue in line with the Dayton principles, which are more relevant than ever and deserve the full support of the Security Council.

We urge the Council to diligently assess the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the basis of an objective analysis that looks at the root of the problems rather than be limited to falsehoods proposed by impostors. The peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina deserve to be able to determine their own priorities on the basis of their own national interests, rather than preferences imposed from abroad. For our part, as one of the States that witnessed the signing of the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, we fully support the fundamental principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the equality of the three constituent peoples and the two entities with broad constitutional powers. We stand ready to engage in constructive cooperation with the aim of ensuring a genuine post-conflict resolution in the country.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): At the outset, I would also like to join others in expressing our heartfelt appreciation and congratulating the Brazilian delegation on their dedicated and successful work in the challenging month of October. I would also like to congratulate China on the successful assumption of the November presidency. Japan assures the Chinese delegation of its full support.

We are pleased that the Security Council adopted resolution 2706 (2023), once again unanimously authorizing the mandate renewal for the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, in doing so, has sent a clear message in support of its important role in maintaining peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the Dayton Peace Agreement. We also thank the European Union and its member States for their commitment to its essential mission. I also welcome the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to this meeting.

Although High Representative Christian Schmidt is not here today, we would like to reassure him of Japan’s unwavering support for him and his Office.

Recognizing the importance of the role of the High Representative, Japan has been contributing a fair amount of the Office's budget since its inception. We are very appreciative of the High Representative's recent report, which the Secretary-General shared with the Council.

Twenty-eight years have passed since the brutal conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina came to an end. Achieving peace, stability and prosperity is critical, not only for the country's future but also for peace and stability in the Western Balkans. As a member of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board, Japan strongly supports Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity, regardless of ethnicity, religion or political affiliation. Since the Dayton Peace Agreement, Japan has been consistently engaging in Peace Implementation Council activities and providing assistance to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in areas such as health care, education and demining. Our support for nation-building and national reconciliation efforts continues to this day.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing an important juncture. It has transitioned from conflict to peace, but the question remains — how can it achieve a successful future?

Japan is deeply concerned about the recent escalation of statements and actions by one entity challenging the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity in ways that would undermine the foundation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Based on the Peace Agreement, it is clear that the two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, are not States. We reiterate that any discourse calling for secession could damage the agreement. Both entities are part of the sovereign State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We strongly urge all political leaders to have a constructive attitude for the future of the country.

The accession of the Western Balkans to the European Union is an important step towards attaining a united Europe. We hope that the advancement of this cause will present an opportunity for the countries of the region, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, to further advance the necessary reforms to achieve greater integration.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our steadfast commitment to supporting peace, stability and prosperity through the steady development of Bosnia

and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans region, as a whole.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me join others in congratulating China on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of November and wishing them the best. I also thank Brazil for its excellent stewardship during the month of October.

We welcome the unanimous adoption today of resolution 2706 (2023), renewing the mandate of European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR-Althea), and I join others in thanking Switzerland for its efforts as penholder on that text. EUFOR-Althea's presence remains crucial for peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly with rising political tensions across the region. I would also like to thank High Representative Schmidt for his latest report, which informs our discussion today.

The High Representative's latest report paints a very grave picture. It outlines the divisive rhetoric and actions of the Republika Srpska leadership and documents the unprecedented rise in attacks against the Dayton Peace Agreement, the rule of law and the High Representative himself. In recent months, we have seen attempts to undo the very fabric and structures of the State. That includes efforts to undermine State and judicial institutions and calls for the separation of the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Faced with that threat, the Security Council must make clear its full support for the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement and its structures. The United Kingdom takes its obligations under Dayton seriously, and we remain an active member of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council. There can be no room for doubt: Bosnia and Herzegovina is, and will remain, a single, sovereign and multi-ethnic country. We support the High Representative's use of his executive powers where the situation requires it.

We also recognize the positive developments outlined in the latest report, including steps towards greater institutional functionality. We urge all parties to build on the positive momentum from elections last year by working together and redoubling their efforts to deliver important reforms in order to enable progress on Bosnia and Herzegovina's Euro-Atlantic path. That will help to arrest the economic stagnation and democratic decline that threaten the country's progress.

We hope all parties will show the political will and courage to continue Bosnia and Herzegovina's journey towards a democratic, stable and prosperous future for the benefit of all its citizens.

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on China's assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of November. We wish you success and equally express appreciation to Brazil for its earnest leadership of the Council last month.

I acknowledge the presence of the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We also acknowledge the significant strides his country is making from the ashes of the tragic war and encourage the resolution of the intense political and multi-ethnic divisions which continue to frustrate efforts to achieve peace and stabilization.

We believe that the continuing support of the international community remains vital to the realization of a peaceful, united and sovereign State of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in abating the persisting political and institutional blockages and challenges to the constitutional order, nearly three decades after the end of the war. Ghana therefore welcomes the Council's unanimous adoption of the resolution to renew the mandate of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR-Althea) for a further 12 months, and we thank Switzerland for its leadership as the penholder for the resolution. By that vote, the Security Council is ensuring that EUFOR-Althea will continue to support the maintenance of a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with the military aspects of the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We note the High Representative's sixty-fourth report on the implementation of the peace agreement and have carefully considered the content thereof. As this is Ghana's final consideration of this agenda item during our present term on the Council, we would like to re-emphasize the following five key points.

First, we reaffirm the centrality of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in ending the war, establishing peace and preserving the unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a federal State. The Agreement, welcomed by the Security Council in its resolution 1031 (1995), marked a crucial turnaround in a bloody conflict that claimed the lives of some 100,000 people, by putting in place structural arrangements for peace,

reconciliation, reconstruction and democracy. In view of the heightening political and ethnic divisions prevailing in the country, it is necessary for the Security Council to collectively reaffirm its support for the implementation of the Agreement and call on all parties to fulfil in good faith the unrealized commitments towards peace and the path of stabilization. We reaffirm Ghana's support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and strongly underline that legitimate aspirations for self-determination must be advanced only in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations and must be addressed through direct and constructive dialogue among all parties.

Secondly, in welcoming the enhanced institutional functionality recorded during the reporting period, we underscore the importance of constructive efforts on the part of all entities to resolve blockages that affect the full functioning of the Government at every level. All three branches of Government must be enabled to operate effectively, having due regard for the separation of powers.

Thirdly, we are of the view that Bosnia and Herzegovina must take advantage of the strong support for the country's European Union (EU) integration, re-echoed yesterday by the Chair of the European Commission. The EU candidate status granted in December 2022 offers the political leaders an opportunity to work together closely to fulfil the necessary requirements, including making advancements in democracy and the rule of law, improving human rights, adopting electoral reforms and enhancing institutional functionality.

Fourthly, we emphasize that persons in authority have an obligation to conduct themselves in a conciliatory, collaborative and constructive manner. We call on political, religious and community leaders to refrain from using hate speech and instigative rhetoric, which could potentially plunge the nation into renewed inter-ethnic violence. We also believe that a national consensus for reconciliation and agreement to avoid the glorification of war criminals and the denial of genocide and war crimes will be instrumental in healing the wounds of the past and laying the foundation for a future of peaceful and mutual coexistence.

Lastly, we advocate for the enhanced participation of women and youth in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The diminishing socioeconomic opportunities for the advancement of the youth in their own country

of origin must be addressed as a national priority to empower them and stem the resource drain arising from their mass migration to other countries.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the importance of maintaining peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the interest of its people and for the stability of the wider Balkan region.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): Let me join others in congratulating you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of November and in assuring you of our support. We warmly congratulate Brazil and its team on a remarkable presidency during the past month and their outstanding efforts in steering the Council in a most challenging time. We welcome the presence of the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Željko Komšić, to this meeting. I thank the High Representative, Mr. Christian Schmidt, for the report shared with the Council, and we highly appreciate and support his continued efforts and active engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We welcome the renewal of the mandate of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The mission has an important and crucial role for the stability and security of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region.

Despite difficulties and challenges, Bosnia and Herzegovina has made important progress. Thanks to continued efforts, including the contribution of High Representative Schmidt, the post-election governments and parliaments are established. The central Government and the Parliamentary Assembly have accelerated the pace of adoption of legislation relevant to the fulfilment of the 14 key priorities required for European integration. Those priorities include indispensable reforms for economic growth, job creation, the achievement of development goals and the fight against corruption. Only a few days ago, the President of the European Commission reiterated the key message that Bosnia and Herzegovina's future is in the European Union, and the work carried out during its first year as a candidate country is a testimony of the country's capacity to deliver. Also, the Berlin process summit held in Tirana on 16 October reconfirmed the accelerated path of the entire region towards the European Union.

Despite that positive trend, it is utterly troubling to note that the President of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, has continued to stoke ethnic tensions and

promote his secessionist agenda. His destabilizing rhetoric and irresponsible actions continue to undermine the country's constitutional order. Mr. Dodik has visibly resolved never to miss an occasion to drag the country into an artificially generated political crisis by blocking the institutional functionality of the State and be the champion of abnormality in Bosnia and Herzegovina. His recent reckless statement calling for the creation of a unified Serb State, the latest of his ridiculous ideas — which, by the way, means undermining four existing States — is not only destabilizing for Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also threatens the region's security and stability.

If Dodik were not a promoter of autocracy and the well-known setbacks that come with it, if he were not the promoter of a dangerous game of escalation and lies for its constituents and if he were not the zealous gravedigger of the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with very dubious outside support, he would certainly win the prize of the comic-in-chief of the region. But he should not be taken lightly because, bit by bit, he is turning away from Europe. He is undermining the proven benefits of regional cooperation, and he is refusing and wasting the prosperity and security that the Euro-Atlantic path offers to Bosnia and Herzegovina and to all Western Balkan States. Instead of engaging in good faith with the reforms required to bring citizens closer to the European Union and build a stable and prosperous future inside Euro-Atlantic institutions, he is daydreaming of changing the map of Europe with a silly stroke of his silly pen.

The truth is that Mr. Dodik has spectacularly failed to bring to the people of the Republika Srpska the real economic benefits promised. Instead he is fanning nationalistic flames, feeding its voters conspiracy theories. By continuously attacking the High Representative and the Constitutional Court of the country, he is openly, continuously and seriously undermining the Dayton Peace Agreement. By introducing legislation in defiance of the opinions of the Venice Commission and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Mr. Dodik is revealing the poor and fading democratic and European credentials of the entity he leads, because he seeks advice and counsel elsewhere, in places where democracy is dying and where freedoms are a thing of the past.

We strongly condemn those actions and call on our European and Euro-Atlantic partners to do the same, vigorously. The people of Republika Srpska should know that actions have consequences, and that they will be the first to pay the price of wrong choices and adventurous decisions. One part cannot — and should not — decide for all. One part cannot hijack the ensemble, even less so with retrograde choices. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina have the right to build their future through commonly agreed efforts in working for their prosperity and the future of next generations. As President von der Leyen highlighted in Sarajevo two days ago, progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina depends largely on dialogue, mutual respect and respect for the constitutional structure and constitutional powers.

This is the last meeting on this issue during our Council mandate. We firmly and profoundly believe that Bosnia and Herzegovina deserves the continued attention of the Council and its partners to maintain stability and unity and to achieve progress in building its future — one its people have chosen, one that leads it forward, not backwards. Bosnia and Herzegovina will need continued efforts, creativity, open-mindedness and inclusivity. It will need its youth to be more involved and integrated to provide fresh energy and direction. It will need to invest in all areas of importance, but more than anything in education so as to strengthen an open and cohesive society, forge tolerance and understanding, especially to fight discrimination, the glorification of criminals, genocide denial and the revisionists who want to drag it down. It will need to be forward-thinking and, while it heals the wounds of the past, to fully embrace the fantastic opportunities for regional cooperation and Euro-Atlantic integration by strengthening its democratic institutions and social cohesion as the best guarantee of a future in peace and prosperity.

Albania will continue to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty, territorial integrity and multi-ethnic character, which is so essential to peace, stability and progress in the Western Balkans and wider Europe.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): Let me first thank you, Mr. President, and the members of the Security Council for the kind words addressed to my country and my delegation on our recently concluded presidency. I would also like to congratulate you and the delegation of China on your assumption of the presidency of the Council and assure you of my delegation's full

support and engagement. I recognize the presence in this meeting of the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia, and the observer of the European Union, and extend a warm welcome to them.

I also thank the Swiss delegation for the way it conducted the consultations with members for a smooth renewal of the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorization. The multinational force plays an essential role in preserving the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina at a time of increasing tensions and challenges to the country's institutions.

The latest report of the High Representative highlights alarming trends, which put the relative stability of recent decades at risk. We are particularly concerned about the resistance of some in relation to the authority of national institutions, seeking in some cases to impose obstacles on the full functioning of the executive and the Constitutional Court. In the recent past, that obstructionist attitude led the High Representative to invoke the Bonn powers — an extreme solution that should be avoided whenever possible through compromises between political forces. The irresponsible rhetoric of some leaders poses risks to the country's stability. Using the threat of secession as a political instrument is unacceptable. It goes against the letter and spirit and of the Dayton Accords, including the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and relevant Security Council resolutions.

Brazil reiterates its support for the consolidation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a functional State integrated into its regional environment — a basic condition for its economic and social development. The Dayton Accords offer a road map to achieving that objective, ensuring the necessary guarantees for the security of all ethnic groups. We encourage local political forces to respect their commitments and collaborate in order to strengthen national institutions. We fully support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and reject attempts to revive outdated and destructive illusions. Calls for the secession of one of its entities must not find an echo today. Brazil condemns the spread of hate speech intent on destroying trust between communities. We encourage other Member States to exert their influence on local leaders to discourage words and actions that threaten national unity.

We believe that strict adherence to the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina still offers the best prospects for preserving peace and stability. Brazil reiterates its support for the full implementation of the 5+2 agenda, allowing Bosnia and Herzegovina to finally complete its transition from international oversight.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council, and I thank Brazil and the entire team for their work in the previous month.

Malta welcomes the renewal of the mandate of the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we thank Switzerland for its efforts as penholder in ensuring a smooth process. We recognize the importance of the operation and its role in maintaining a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We remain fully committed to the operation's presence in the country and support the work it carries out.

Malta fully supports Bosnia and Herzegovina's commitment to European Union membership and welcomes the steps already taken towards that objective. We encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina and its leaders to redouble efforts to quickly adopt the policies and legal reforms required to fulfil the 14 key priorities identified by the European Commission. The strengthening of the country's constitutional, electoral and judicial frameworks is essential for making meaningful progress towards European Union membership. We stress our call for those reforms to be based on the rule of law and to address the needs of all members of society. Malta highlights the importance of enhancing women's representation in all Government institutions and their full participation in decision-making to reap the benefits of an inclusive public administration.

However, Malta is concerned about the actions and rhetoric adopted by the Republika Srpska entity that fuel secessionist sentiments and challenge the sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutional order and international personality of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Malta strongly condemns all threats and unilateral actions that could escalate ethnic tensions and undermine peace, stability and the quality of life in the country and wider region. We remain concerned about the legislation and initiatives in the Republika Srpska entity that are creating obstacles to the country's progress and to its path to EU accession. Legal changes that conflict with the role of the Constitutional Court

or put it in doubt cannot be tolerated. We also urge the authorities to implement credible, genuine measures to respect and protect human rights and freedom of expression in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The free media and civil society play a crucial role and their status should be preserved.

Malta reiterates its unwavering support for a single, sovereign and united Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its future in the European Union. The country's territorial integrity must be maintained. We are confident that through inclusive dialogue, responsible and sensible leadership and strong political will from all parties, Bosnia and Herzegovina will be able to advance the cause of peaceful coexistence, strengthen the country's cohesion and realize its full potential. Malta believes that a united and stable Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the best interests of all its citizens and of the Western Balkans as a whole.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

I would like to welcome to today's meeting His Excellency Mr. Željko Komšić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the representatives of Serbia, Croatia and the European Union.

China's position on Bosnia and Herzegovina is consistent and clear. We respect its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and the choice made by its people for the future and the destiny of the country. We encourage all ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina to aim to promote national development and improve the people's well-being, actively engage in constructive dialogue and enhance mutual trust so as to achieve national reconciliation and jointly safeguard political and social stability in the country.

The use of the Bonn powers has caused considerable controversy in Bosnia and Herzegovina for some time now. I would like to reiterate that the High Representative mechanism and its Bonn powers are special arrangements for special periods. Ultimately, it is the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina themselves who should settle affairs pertaining to their country.

The economy and people's livelihoods in Bosnia and Herzegovina are currently facing increased difficulties and challenges. The report transmitted by the Secretary-General indicates that the population outflow from Bosnia and Herzegovina — with as many

as 100,000 people leaving in the past decade — is a very serious problem. We call on the international community to increase its support and assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina so that it can meet its development challenges and advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the same time, we encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina to provide a fair, just and non-discriminatory business environment for foreign enterprises in order to better attract foreign investors and create employment opportunities.

China is supportive of all efforts conducive to maintaining peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We commend the role played by Serbia, Croatia and other countries in the region in that regard. We hope that the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to play a constructive role in maintaining security and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, assisting in mine clearance and combating terrorism and organized crime. In that process, the views of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be heard and respected.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Komšić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset, I would like to express my respects and congratulations to the President of the Security Council, as well as my satisfaction with the extension of the mandate of the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The occasion for my address today refers to the events of the latest six-month period as presented in the report of the Office of the High Representative, with a special emphasis on several very important facts that have shaped political events in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the activities of the High Representative.

At the beginning, I would like to remind the Council that the legitimate goal of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Dayton Peace Agreement, was the establishment of peace, which has certainly been achieved in the past 28 years. After the establishment of peace, Bosnia and Herzegovina began the process of its transition towards a modern democratic State, which is the next goal and to which full attention should be given. Unfortunately, 28 years after the signing of the Dayton Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina has still not completed

the entire path of its democratic transition and has remained trapped in a vortex of ethnically based policies and various ethnically projected goals. The Dayton Peace Agreement itself has become a tool for various geopolitical contests between various players on the geopolitical scene.

We can also see a common denominator among the different actors in those geopolitical contests. It is the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina has not actually been allowed to make the transition to a modern democratic State and has therefore remained stuck in ethnic policies aimed at ensuring the complete collapse of the country's political and social systems. In fact, ethnic politics and ethnic groups are being used to create tension and instability in order to achieve both short- and long-term geopolitical goals more easily. I consider such geopolitical behaviour towards Bosnia and Herzegovina absolutely unacceptable. We have to look at all the reports of the Office of the High Representative, present and future, through that prism. The facts of the various geopolitical games that are being played out in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be demonstrated simply through the efforts of various actors and political groups to challenge the legitimacy of the High Representative, thereby trying to create space for the implementation of planned geopolitical interests.

Regardless of the fact that there are political debates in Bosnia and Herzegovina about whether the High Representative is legitimate or whether he was elected in accordance with the appropriate procedure, I would like to clearly point out that I support the existence of the Office of the High Representative until the realization of the so-called 5+2 conditions creates an environment for its closure. I do not want to participate in any unnecessary discussions about whether the High Representative is legitimate or not, because Bosnia and Herzegovina has no role in the appointment of the High Representative. Only those who appoint the High Representative can answer that question. Not even the High Representative himself can give any interpretation about his own appointment, because he did not appoint himself. As for the specific report of the High Representative, it is essential to highlight several very important elements that the High Representative himself either did not mention in his report or did not present in an appropriate way.

First, the current High Representative is the first to face mass protests by the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who on two occasions protested

in front of the High Representative's Office, expressing their dissatisfaction with his behaviour and announced decisions. The large number of both gatherings of citizens, in which no political parties participated, tells us that the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina are aware of all important issues in our country, but also that they are aware and dissatisfied with some bad decisions made by the current High Representative. I believe that the High Representative will appreciate and respect this in his future work, especially in the field of making future decisions.

Secondly, there are some decisions of the High Representative which are good and protect the constitutional order in Bosnia and Herzegovina but, unfortunately, those decisions were insufficient and vague. Because of the vagueness of those decisions of the High Representative, political tensions grew, as well as efforts to further ethnically divide Bosnia and Herzegovina until its complete dissolution.

It is clear that the High Representative deals relatively poorly with such political efforts. It is necessary to emphasize that there is a great disproportion between the views presented in his report in relation to what the High Representative is really doing to overcome these problems. His diagnosis of the problem, which concerns the behaviour of actors from the Republika Srpska entity, in which they talk about an alleged peaceful separation, peaceful dissolution or entity competences, is certainly correct, but his diagnosis is not followed by adequate activities.

Whether this behaviour of the High Representative is caused by the lack of his capacities or because of the lack of support from the international community is a question that deserves a clear and precise answer. The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina expect such an answer, especially in the new geopolitical context. I would also like to point out that I will appreciate every effort of the High Representative when blockages arise in the functioning of State institutions, as he tries to solve blockages through his role as a mediator. This is certainly his obligation under annex 10 of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

When difficulties arise in the functioning of the State Government, due to the different political interests of two entities, only then can the High Representative appear in his role of mediator. However, the actions of the current High Representative are usually not undertaken within his role of mediator, as required by annex 10 of the Dayton Peace Agreement, but rather are

proactive towards one entity, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and reactive towards the Republika Srpska entity. Such different actions connected with the different treatment of difficulties in the functioning of the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina puts the High Representative in a very compromising position, because it creates a possible sense of political insecurity and bias on his part.

Thirdly, we are particularly concerned about the statement of the Prime Minister of a neighbouring country stating that they lobbied the High Representative to impose such changes to the entity Constitution and the election law of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which correspond to the political interests of the neighbouring country, not Bosnia and Herzegovina, and are to the detriment of the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I am of course referring to the Prime Minister and the Government of the neighbouring country of Croatia. This can be significant evidence and an indicator of the bias of the High Representative, which then opens up many other questions.

One of these questions relates to the fact that the creation of ethnically pure territories in Bosnia and Herzegovina is under the de facto political control of neighbouring countries, which the High Representative did through the imposed model of elections for the Upper House of the legislative body in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina entity. Such an effort is certainly not good or appropriate practice.

Fourthly, I would like to highlight one sentence from the opinion of the European Commission on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership in the European Union, which states that elections for the House of Peoples based on ethnicity and place of residence is not in accordance with European standards. It was exactly the High Representative who based the elections for the entity House of Peoples on ethnicity and place of residence, giving living human beings an ethnic coefficient or a different mathematical value, which is an expression of extreme discrimination and in complete contradiction to the key priorities that the European Union puts to Bosnia and Herzegovina as an obligation. With this, the High Representative slowed down the progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards European integration.

Whether such a thing is an expression of his political will, clumsiness or ignorance of the events, or whether he is possibly implementing the policies of a part of the international community or a neighbouring country

remain open questions. This is especially evident when we look at the extent to which the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights are being avoided, since those judgements set out an obligation to Bosnia and Herzegovina to change the entire political paradigm for its alignment with democratic standards.

There are two groups of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. The first is the *Sejdić-Finci* case and other related cases group, which calls for the protection of passive voting rights. The second is the *Kovačević* case, which calls for the protection of active voting rights and the rejection of the ethnic concept in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through the elimination of all those elements that undermine democracy in order to ensure the equality of all citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The judgment of the European Court in the *Kovačević* case opens up space for the necessary transition towards a normal democratic State, harmonized with European standards and democratic values. For this reason, I consider certain comments by some domestic political factors on the *Kovačević* judgment as completely inappropriate, especially since the efforts of domestic and international political actors are obviously aimed at maintaining the ethnic concept and ethnic divisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is the same political ambition as that of the neighbouring countries.

Fifthly, it is not possible to avoid the fact that the High Representative showed his bias by allowing one political group to form a new Government in Bosnia and Herzegovina, contrary to the election results, by suspending the entity's Constitution for 24 hours. This was an unprecedented attack on the rule of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina, because the suspension of any constitution cannot have a legitimate goal. These are also not good practices, because they portray the High Representative as a biased person, which, owing to the work he performs, he should never be.

Sixthly, I want to express great concern about the efforts of the High Representative to solve the issue of State property, in a controversial way, implying the need to distribute State property. His ideas about State property distribution deviate from good practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, because property is not territory, or is territory property, so no one has the right to treat it that way.

Finally, I would like to point out again that I strongly support the existence of the Office of the High Representative until the so-called 5+2 conditions

are met, and I call on the international community to cooperate in the realization of those conditions. We are fully aware that the 5+2 conditions are very broad and unclear and that it is difficult to demonstrate their fulfilment statistically, but also that those conditions are very important and ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a normal democratic State that is able to manage all internal processes.

For those reasons, I am asking for the support of the international community to finally establish full democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the full rule of law and full protection of individual human and civil rights. On that path, the main priority should be the implementation of all the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. That is the only way we can make a significant step towards stabilization, both in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entire region of the Western Balkans, which will enable us to respond to existing geopolitical challenges. Everything else represents a path to possible uncontrolled situations, which would be very difficult to manage and to foresee how badly they could end.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to Mr. Skoog.

Mr. Skoog: I would like to congratulate you and your country, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We also greatly appreciate the way Brazil handled the Council's presidency in the month of October.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 27 member States. The candidate countries Türkiye, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this brief statement.

The European Union is very pleased that the mandate of the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR-Althea) was unanimously renewed by the Council this morning, given the Operation's important role in supporting the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in maintaining a safe and secure environment. I want to pay tribute to Switzerland for its able diplomacy in handling of the draft of resolution 2706 (2023) and ensuring its successful adoption. The European Union welcomes Bosnia and Herzegovina's continued strong support to the executive mandate of EUFOR-Althea and its continued presence.

We reiterate our full and unequivocal commitment to the EU membership perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The future of the country and its citizens lies within the European Union. We will continue to strengthen and intensify our engagement at all levels to support the country's political, economic and social transformation, including through continued assistance based on tangible progress on the rule of law and socioeconomic reforms, as well as on Bosnia and Herzegovina's adherence to EU values, rules and standards. Securing solid and irreversible achievements in the areas of rule of law, the economy, the functioning of democratic institutions and public administration reforms remains decisive for meeting the requirements of EU membership and represents a long-term investment into peace, democracy, prosperity, security and stability in Europe.

In December 2022, the European Council granted the status of EU candidate country to Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the understanding that the steps identified in the European Commission's recommendations be taken in order to strengthen the rule of law, the fight against corruption and organized crime, in addition to migration management and ensuring fundamental rights. In the current geopolitical context, the EU underlines the urgency for the country to move forward on its EU path, in particular via fulfilling all 14 key priorities for the opening of EU accession negotiations identified in the Commission's opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for EU membership, as endorsed by the Council of the European Union in 2019. The EU also calls on all political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to swiftly implement the commitments set out in the agreement reached on 12 June 2022 and urgently finalize the constitutional and electoral reform, again in line with the 14 key priorities. The EU welcomes the recent steps taken by Bosnia and Herzegovina in line with those expectations and encourages further progress on EU-related reforms in the coming months.

The EU is seriously concerned about legislation and initiatives in the Republika Srpska entity that run counter to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU path, including secessionist rhetoric and questioning the constitutional order of the country. We deplore the adoption of legislation in the Republika Srpska entity on the inapplicability of the decisions of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina within the entity. Furthermore, we deplore the entry into force of amendments to the criminal code of the Republika

Srpska entity reintroducing criminal penalties for defamation. Respect for human rights, the freedom of expression, media freedom and pluralism, as well as the freedom of the operation of civil society organizations, are key pillars of a democratic society. We emphasize that the sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutional order and international personality of Bosnia and Herzegovina need to be maintained. Any action against those principles will lead to serious consequences.

(spoke in French)

The European Union urges all political actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina to refrain from and discontinue all actions or rhetoric of a provocative or divisive nature, in particular those that call into question the country's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity; to put an end to the glorification of convicted war criminals; and to work actively towards reconciliation. The European Union reaffirms its strong support for the mandate of Mr. Christian Schmidt, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(spoke in English)

Finally, I want to reiterate our unequivocal commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective as a single, united and sovereign country.

The President *(spoke in Chinese)*: I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Mr. Stevanovic (Serbia): I would first like to convey my full congratulations to our great friends from the People's Republic of China on assuming the presidency of the Security Council, and to Brazil for its great leadership of the Council in the month of October. I wanted to mention that in particular because we have had some different examples of Council presidencies — like in September, when Albania totally misused that position to promote the self-declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija — and I must notify the Albanian Ambassador that in September, October and November, Kosovo and Metohija was and still is a part of the Republic of Serbia.

Secondly, I must react to the outrageous, unabashed claim of the Albanian Ambassador. Implicitly, he tried to point the finger at two countries — one of which I represent, and the second is here in the Chamber too. If this world were not tragic, it would be very funny place. We are getting a full lecture about human rights and democracy from a country that was the most famous representative in the twentieth century of the opposite

of a beacon of democracy and human rights in Europe. I know that that performance today which — thanks to the higher power and the rules of Security Council, is the last one we will have the honour to listen to — portrayed us in a very malicious way, just as they have in over the past 20 months since 24 February of last year. I want to inform the Council that per capita — and this is fact, not opinion — the highest number of volunteers in the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, including some of its best-known butchers, were from the Albanian ethnic group. I asked once at a meeting of European Union Ambassadors that they not defend the argument of the two brotherly Slavic nations to us.

The issue that we are addressing today serves as evidence of the complex legacy left in the wake of the Yugoslav crisis. The Dayton Peace Agreement, on which Serbia serves as one of the guarantors, was instrumental in concluding the tragic conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina and establishing a foundation for a peaceful future. We should not underestimate the significance of what we have already achieved. As outlined in the mission reports of the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina maintains a state of stability free from immediate threats to its security. That stability has been sustained for the past 28 years, despite all political tensions and bickering. It has paved the way for economic and social recovery, advancements in European Union (EU) integration and the fostering of enhanced cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and its neighbouring countries. While we should aim for greater achievements, the principles of the agreement remain a solid basis for Bosnia and Herzegovina's development and progress towards further integration.

When it comes to differences between the entities regarding significant questions such as the judiciary, property, electoral laws or other issues, Serbia's stance remains consistent. Those matters are Bosnia and Herzegovina's internal affairs. At the same time, Serbia firmly believes that a consensus is required and is a reliable way to address the current needs and aspirations of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Unilateral actions serve only to generate new challenges and continue the useless undertakings to establish dominance in the decision-making process. We have always emphasized the role of dialogue in reaching agreements between the two entities and the three constituent peoples.

For Serbia, fostering bilateral relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina serves as a cornerstone of regional

stability and prosperity. We are fully committed to our bilateral dialogue and cooperation, and we will continue to be a reliable partner in advancing our mutual interests. At the same time, Serbia remains devoted to the transparent development of its relations with Republika Srpska, in line with the Dayton Peace Agreement. We also strive to enhance cooperation with the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In our region, there is a growing need for a more effective European Union enlargement process and sustained advancement on reforms. We applaud every stride taken by Bosnia and Herzegovina in that direction. We stand ready to share our experience and expertise gained from the EU integration process and remain open to collaboration that draws us closer to our shared goal of EU membership. The Republic of Serbia has a proven record of initiating and fostering good-neighbourly relations and creating a new model of cooperation in South-East Europe. We aim for the free flow of people, goods, capital and services. As an immediate neighbour, the stability and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina is closely linked with Serbia's well-being. Therefore, Serbia is, and will continue to be, committed to peace, security and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina and regional peace.

I say *bon voyage* to Albania; we will not miss them.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): I would like to congratulate Brazil on its very successful presidency of the Security Council, as well as the People's Republic of China on assuming the presidency. We wish it every success in the month of November.

Croatia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union on behalf of its member States. I would also like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

First of all, we would like to welcome the extension of the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, since its role has been very important in supporting stability and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We would like to commend the recent progress by Bosnia and Herzegovina in the process of European integration. The adoption of the new Law on Amendments to the Law on the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council, the Law on Changes and Amendments to the Law on Ombudsman for Human Rights, the Law on Changes and Amendments to the

Law on Foreigners and the Law on Free Access to Information at the Level of Institutions are major achievements in that regard. Those reforms, while being significant from the point of view of European integration, are even more important for the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its judiciary and the functioning of the country. We are glad that that progress is also reflected in the sixty-fourth report of the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whom we strongly support.

I would like to reiterate our support for High Representative Schmidt. His decisions have significantly enhanced the functionality and political stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We also took note of some worrisome aspects of the High Representative's report. In that regard, we call on political actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina who use inflammatory rhetoric, especially in Republika Srpska, to avoid the practice and act constructively for the benefit of the three constituent peoples and all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Cooperation, democratic dialogue and mutual respect are the only way forward.

Croatia will continue to strongly support Bosnia and Herzegovina in the process of European integration, as well as in our development cooperation, transport, connectivity and other projects. Work on constitutional and electoral reform should be continued and completed as a matter of priority. We are convinced that only full respect for the principles of equality among constituent peoples and the non-discrimination of all citizens, as enshrined in the Dayton Paris Peace Agreement, can bring about lasting political stability to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Finally, let me make the distinction between Croatia's full support to Bosnia and Herzegovina and its attitude towards Mr. Komšić. Regarding the presence of Mr. Komšić at today's meeting and his remarks, I want to point out that the Republic of Croatia does not recognize him as a legitimate member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He obtained the position of the Croat member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina by manipulative electoral engineering. We sincerely hope that the envisioned changes to

the electoral law will prevent such manipulation in the future.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The representative of Albania has asked to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I will be brief, but I feel obliged to respond to the totally unhinged remarks by the Ambassador of Serbia.

I think that is now understood that we were discussing Bosnia and Herzegovina today and nothing else, not Serbia, not the Republic of Kosovo, or any other country. I did not mention in my statement any other country other than Bosnia and Herzegovina, the subject of this meeting. I utterly reject everything that he mentioned in a total lack of coherence, which is not the first time that this speaker has done this. He has done it here and elsewhere, but that is his problem. I do, however, agree with one thing. During the time of communism, Albania had a system that denied human rights and freedoms. That is true. But that was three decades ago — 33 years ago. My colleague seems not to have been updated. By the way, the same held true for the former Yugoslavia, his country, as well as half of Europe. That is therefore not the issue. We have made our transition to democracy in peace, not through war. We have changed ourselves through our own will, not through crimes, as Milošević did for all of the Balkans during the breakup of Yugoslavia.

I will conclude with the following. We are proud of our term on the Security Council. We are sure that we have done our best to contribute to its work and that, of course, after our Council term, we will contribute to cooperation, peace and security in the Balkans and Europe.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina has asked to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Komšić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Without going into any detail, I consider it as simply inappropriate for my colleague from Croatia to call the Chairman of the Presidency of my country illegal, illegitimate and everything else he said in his initial and last statement.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.